

## Public Education in Cultural Heritage



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#### Impact on Public Education of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Hong Kong

Professor Selina Chan is the pioneer in research on the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival (Yulan Festival) as an intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup> She argues that the festival is not only rich in its religious meanings, but also has fascinating social and political implications. The festival carries the economic memories of early immigrants in Hong Kong and reveals Hong Kong's collective memories of disasters. Her research also suggests that memories of the festival act as a symbol of Hong Kong heritage in shaping different levels of cultural identities in the post-colonial era. These findings have had significant impact on public education in intangible cultural heritage.

#### *Facilitating students' understanding of the festival through the general education course in secondary schools*

The supplementary text (Hong Kong Yulan Culture and Contemporary Society) for the general education course in secondary schools cites her book as a reference. This supplementary text was distributed by the Federation of Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community Organization to 423 secondary schools in Hong Kong for a better understanding of the festival as intangible cultural heritage. Besides, 777 copies were distributed to secondary schools in Taiwan, Korea and Thailand to promote their understanding of the festival in Hong Kong.

#### *Promoting public education of intangible cultural heritage at the Hong Kong History Museum*

Prof. Chan's publications are widely accessed by museum curators for exhibitions involving the festival and Hong Kong history in general. The communal and innovative aspects of the festival described in her work will be displayed in the Exhibition Gallery of Hong Kong Stories at the Hong Kong History Museum in late 2022 for two years, and thus will help to shape public understanding of the festival.

#### *Enhancing the learning of public history through enriching the content of Hungry Ghosts Festival cultural tours operated by NGOs*

Prof. Chan's publications have been used by NGO workers on cultural heritage in the planning of cultural tours. At the invitation of the Conservancy Association, she delivered a public lecture entitled "Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Collective Memories and Identities" on 7 August 2016. The talk was uploaded to youtube for public viewing and was also used as an internal teaching resource by the Conservancy Association in the planning of cultural tours on the festival.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Chan served as a member in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee in HKSAR government from 2008-2014. She is currently a council member of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust and a member of the Expert Member Panel in the Renovation of the Permanent Exhibition at the Hong Kong History Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Her research on the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in 2012-2015 was commissioned by the Federation of Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community Organizations. It was supported with funding from the Jockey Club Charities Trust.

*Raising public awareness of the social and cultural meanings of the festival through lectures to senior civil servants (including policy makers) and the general public*

- The National Studies and Training Services Unit of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute under the Civil Service Bureau of the Hong Kong Government invited Professor Chan to give a lecture on the "Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival: Collective Memories, Intangible Cultural Heritage and Identities" on 12 December 2016 at its North Point Government Office. A total of 111 civil servants from 32 different bureaus and departments attended the lecture. The majority were civil servants in middle to senior management levels from the Housing Department, Lands Department, Environmental Protection Department, Hong Kong Police Force and Social Welfare Department. In the post-lecture evaluation, 99 percent of them found the lecture to have been very good and 57% rated it an excellent talk. Some found the talk very useful for community development. Comments from the audience included the following statements: "the lecture is helpful for community development and local construction", "enhances civil servants' understanding of society", etc.
- A book launch seminar was conducted by Prof. Chan at the Yaumati Branch of Chung Hwa Bookstore on 11 May 2016. It attracted over 50 members of the public and offered them an opportunity to understand the social and political meanings of the festival.



- In response to an invitation from the Hong Kong Public Library, Prof. Chan presented her findings at the public library in Mongkok on 27 May 2017. The lecture was well-received by more than 60 members of the public.
- A public lecture by Professor Chan organized by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust was attended by over 100 people from all walks of life on 25 August 2018. It was also broadcasted live on Facebook and has received more than 1,232 views.
- The Lord Wilson Heritage Trust invited Prof. Chan to be the guide for a 20-person cultural tour on the Hungry Ghosts Festival held in Causeway Bay on 31 August 2018. The tour enhanced public knowledge on the festival.
- Prof. Chan gave a public lecture at an event organized by the Hong Kong History Museum, the Asia Pacific Research Institute (Chinese University of Hong Kong), and the Pun Sutong Shanghai-Hong Kong Economic Policy Research Institute (Lingnan University) on 29 December 2018. It attracted around 200 attendees from all walks of life and was also enthusiastically received.

**Publications:**

2018. "Heritagizing the Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival in Hong Kong." *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*. Amsterdam: University Press.

2017. "Moral Taste: Food for Ghosts in Hong Kong's Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival." *The Journal of Chinese Dietary Culture* 13(2):52-85.

2015. *Chaozhou Hungry Ghosts Festival: Collective Memories, Intangible Cultural Heritage and Identities*. (潮籍盂蘭勝會：集體回憶、非物質文化與身份認同). Hong Kong (香港): Chung Hwa Book Co. (HK) Ltd (中華書局).

